NH Schools Using Steps to Success
Moving from Step 4: Assessing Practices to Step 5: Creating a Plan

Now that you and your team have completed assessing your current practices against the indicators in the *Steps to Success* system, how do you use that information to create a plan that offers substantial promise of improving student results? This guidance document offers suggested strategies for taking the data from your assessment work and using it to develop a realistic, meaningful and do-able plan for improvement.

I: Check Your Work

Just as we caution students to check their work before handing in an assignment, *Steps to Success* schools should pause and check their work before proceeding to craft goals and define plans. Checking your work is aimed at answering the question:
> *Have we identified the instructional and organizational practices that are the*
> *__real__ __barriers__ to our students' success?*

Consider these activities to "check your work" –
1. Print the report, *List of Indicators Included in the Plan* from the *Steps to Success* system. (*Gray box, upper right of School Main Page, Resources and Reporting*)
   > Before printing, SORT the list by INDEX score by clicking on the arrow next to the INDEX header so that the indicators are listed from highest rating to lowest.
2. Distribute the list of indicators to either (a) the SINI team or (b) the staff and ask them to read the list and do a "gut check" of the relative position of the practices. Ask them to ask themselves –
   > Are any of these practices really more critical to our success than its position indicates?
   > Do the practices with the highest index scores represent the __greatest barriers__ to our success / our students' success?
   > Given what we know about our student outcomes, which practices will target the groups struggling to reach grade level standards? (the "inputs" related to "outcomes" question)
   > Invite reviewers to discuss their "gut" reaction to the list (in large or small groups) and share their findings.

3. The team should consider the results of the "gut check" and ask probing and clarifying questions of the indicators identified as possibly less or more important to the school's success than the initial ranking. Some probing and clarifying questions to ask:
   > Is our data/ evidence for this rating strong? Persuasive? Thin?

(*thinking ahead -- keep in mind for the planning stage: If our evidence isn't firm, should we build into our plan a strategy for collecting better evidence?*)

What does our student achievement data tell us that confirms/ contradicts our ranking of these practices? (i.e., if instructional practices are all rated as "fully implemented," student achievement should be strong; is that the case?)

Finally: While our list may not be perfect, are we confident we have at least identified the essential areas for change in order to achieve our desired student learning outcomes?

** At the end of the "check your work" activities, you will have a good sense of the big picture of areas for improvement that will frame your improvement plan. **

II. Cluster Similar Indicators

One likely outcome of your "gut check" activity is the emergence of apparent groups of similar indicators. That's great! In *Steps to Success*, indicators convert into <u>*objectives*</u> as you move into Step 5, and objectives are subsets of <u>*goals*</u>. This step in your planning process asks you to examine objectives (indicators) that are similar and begin to write a SINI goal that reflects the intent and meaning of the <u>*cluster*</u> of objectives.

Consider these strategies as you cluster your objectives (indicators):
1. Think "affinity diagram" – one possible approach, if the group size and workspace are suitable, is to create a wall size map of similar indicators. Here's one way --
    -- print the priority indicators in large font and cut them apart
    -- "deal out" the indicators to the working group (leadership team? full staff?)
    -- invite participants to tape their indicators on the wall next to/ below similar indicators (*5-10 mins*)
    -- once all the indicators are grouped, invite participants to review the groupings and move indicators to other clusters as needed (*5-10 mins*) (*if major disagreements on a major indicator, invite discussion and reach a compromise or consensus; if not major, set the disputed indicator aside for now*)
    -- reach consensus that the clusters are "good" representations of the major issues the school needs to address,

2. Examine the "other" group of indicators. As the planning team ask
    -- are any of these objectives being addressed as part of initiatives/ projects that are *already in place*? Think about school or district RtI or plc efforts, recent adoptions of new math or reading programs; what about a PBIS effort you will continue and want to strengthen?

<mark>*Remember: You Can't Do It All!*</mark>

IF you have more than 3 clusters, look across them and make a determination about which groups you will include in your plan. The ones you choose should represent changes that are DO-ABLE and LIKELY to make a difference in the learning environment and enhance the quality of professional practice at the school.

**At this point, if you haven't done so before, please consider sharing your work on *Steps to Success* with your school community – staff, parents, district leadership, and school board. **

III. Write a Goal Statement for Each Cluster

Once you've decided which areas for improvement will have the greatest impact on your school's success, craft a goal statement that describes the outcome of fully and effectively achieving the objectives in the cluster. (*A piece of advice: writing in committee is a painful exercise; draft individually or in pairs and review, revise in groups.*)

What constitutes a "good" goal statement? Many of you are familiar with the advice to write S.M.A.R.T. goals – **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely. Many of you have also recognized how challenging it is to write SMART goals! A practical way to check whether your goal statements are "good" is to invite others to examine them (and the indicators they correspond to) and answer these questions:

- ➢ Is this a goal that addresses core areas our school needs to change?
- ➢ Does this goal describe what we need to do to improve our ability to help our students achieve success?
- ➢ Does this goal clearly describe what the outcome will be if our efforts are successful?

One advantage of using *Steps to Success* is that your action plan is written at the objective level so that it is easier for the school staff to know what they're expected to do as part of the improvement plan. We'll review the components of the plan further into the process.

Here are some examples of goals and the indicators (objective) supporting them. While not perfect SMART goals, each example demonstrates how clusters of indicators can support a common aim.

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Example 1:
GOAL: To improve student achievement by adopting (*or enhancing, reinforcing***) a response to intervention approach for grades 4 through 8 in mathematics which will provide high quality core instruction and targeted intervention and/or enrichment based on student data.**

> ***Objectives (Indicators***) –
> IIIA07: All teachers differentiate assignments (individualize instruction) in response to individual student performance on pre-tests and other methods of assessment.

IIB04: Teachers individualize instruction based on pre-test results to provide support for some students and enhanced learning opportunities for others.

IIIA17: All teachers re-teach when necessary.

IIIC05: All teachers us a variety of instructional modes.

Example 1	
Specific	"student achievement"; "response to intervention"; "mathematics"; "core instruction"; "intervention/ enrichment"
Measurable	(none listed; could insert mention of local and/or state assessments, suggest an expected rate of improvement – i.e., "10% increase in Index score" but will need to show evidence such a gain is reasonable)
Achievable	Objectives describe activities within the scope and range of RtI activities adopted by other schools
Realistic	Focusing on "core instruction" is a do-able endeavor, builds on existing expectations, not requiring dramatic change in staff skill
Timely	Reinforcing core instruction can occur immediately, does not require long planning time; instructional practices do not require "new" knowledge for staff, just reinforcement and renewed focus

Example 2:

GOAL: To improve student achievement and teacher effectiveness by engaging teachers in ongoing, embedded professional learning within a revised team structure which establishes specific benchmarks for implementing instructional practices that increase student learning.

Objectives (Indicators) –

ID03: All teams operate with work plans for the year and specific work products to produce.

IID08: Instructional Teams use student learning data to assess strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and instructional strategies.

IF08: Profession al development for the whole faculty includes assessment of strengths and areas in need of improvement from classroom observations of indicators of effective teaching.

Example 2	
Specific	"student achievement"; "teacher effectiveness"; "engage"; "professional learning"; "team structure"; "specific benchmarks"
Measurable	(none listed; could insert mention of local and/or state assessments for student achievement gains; could insert mention of a measure of implementation such as walk-throughs or surveys of enacted curricula)
Achievable	If ID01 is already in place, other actions required of teams are within a reasonable scope of work; pd aligned with indicators of effective practice may required some modifications of typical expectations but not beyond the scope of reasonableness
Realistic	Teams often exist and expecting them to declare a work plan is a do-able expectations
Timely	Improving the impact of instructional teams can demonstrate changes in teaching practice, professional climate, curriculum alignment/ quality and student achievement soon after implementation.

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Turning the Page

The process of conducting a comprehensive needs assessment is a critical first step in developing a credible plan for the kind of change required of schools in improvement status. For *Steps to Success* schools, completing the review of current practice guided by the indicators of effective practice represents both an end point and a starting point. If your district has provided a Coach, s/he can provide more direct assistance if you need it, or you can move forward with your own support team. The activities described in this guidance are not required but you may find them helpful. Please let me know how it works for you.

NEXT STEP: CREATING A PLAN

Preview: Steps to Success schools will create their restructuring plan using Step 5 of the tool. Plans will be developed for the priority objectives in each of your goals. You will create "tasks" in the plan for each primary objective each of which will include

-- ACTIVITIES (the actions you'll conduct)

-- RESOURCES (the money and materials you'll use for each activity)

-- MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION (describe how you will monitor (measure) whether the activities are being done)

-- MONITORING EFFECTIVENESS (describe how you will measure whether the changes you expect are occurring, ESPECIALLY improved student achievement (*note – you won't be able to use NECAP for this measure since the testing timeline and the plan timeline will differ)

Check out examples of plans in the Mt. Adams Elementary School site in Steps to Success (log on to Indistar® using   (login) NHSAMPLE and (password) NHSAMPLE. Look at Plans for Indicators IE06, IIB04, and IIIA01.

***Also, Try out the "Indicator Checklist Report in the REPORTS menu. This is the form where you enter your goal statement and check off the objectives within each goal. ***